Public Petitions Committee – a template for e-petitions

Should you wish to submit an e-petition allowing signatures to be gathered online on the Public Petitions Committee e-petitioner web pages please complete the template below. Before submitting your e-petition please consult the Guidance on submission of public petitions for advice on what is and is not admissible. You may also seek advice from the Clerk to the Committee whose contact details can be found at the end of this form.

Details of principal petitioner:
Please enter the name of person and organisation raising the petition, including a contact address where correspondence should be sent to.

Mr. Kevin Herd

Text of petition:
The petition should clearly state what action the petitioner wishes the Parliament to take in no more than 5 lines of text, e.g.
The petitioner requests that the Scottish Parliament considers and debates the implications of the proposed Agenda for Change legislation for Speech and Language Therapy Services and service users within the NHS


Period for gathering signatures:
Please enter the closing date for gathering signatures on your petition, which we would usually recommend is a period of between 4-6 weeks

Closing date: 31 December 2005
Additional information:

Please enter any other information relating to the issues raised in your e-petition, including the reasons why the action requested is necessary. The text entered in this field should not exceed 2 pages. However, you may wish to provide further sources/links to background information.

We feel that this course of action is necessary considering the seriousness of the complaint.

George Herd died on 3rd January 2005 in the midst of all this so called procedures that the N.H.S. 24 felt necessary to imply on that day.

Since then, we discovered that we were not the only family to be affected by the incompetence of the N.H.S. 24 team. We have had numerous people relating their experiences and dismay at the system.
Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting an e-petition:

Before submitting a petition to the Parliament, petitioners are expected to have made an attempt to resolve their issues of concern, by for example, making representations to the Scottish Executive or seeking the assistance of locally elected representatives, such as councillors, MSPs and MSPs. Details of those approached should be entered.

Mrs. M. Ewing. M.S. P.
Scottish Parliament

Comments to stimulate on-line discussion:

Please provide at least one comment to set the scene for an on-line discussion on the petition, not exceeding 10 lines of text.

I am trying to change N.H.S. 24. This year my Father George Herd of Findochty died on the 3rd January. When he became ill, two of his Friends called the N.H.S. 24 for a Doctor to be called to visit him as he was very ill. Because their was not a relative available they refused to send a Doctor. After some time his Friend dialled 999 but sadly it was too late for my Father.

I, myself work off-shore and was on the rig. I know what it felt that day when I got the call, that my Father had passed away but once I realised the carry on with all the phone calls for a Doctor and the legislation stating that they required a relative or to talk to the person themselves, whom at the time was so ill that this was impossible.

I felt let down by the system.

Please sign the petitions so this need not happen again.

Petitioners appearing before the Committee

The Convener of the Committee may invite petitioners to appear before the Public Petitions Committee to speak in support of their petition. Such an invitation will only be made if the Convener considers this would be useful in facilitating the Committee's consideration of the petition. It should be noted that due to the large volume of petitions it has to consider, the Committee is not able to invite all petitioners to appear before the Committee to speak in support of their petition.

Please indicate below if you do NOT wish to make a brief statement before the Committee when it comes to consider your petition.

I do NOT wish to make a brief statement before the Committee
Signature of principal petitioner:
When satisfied that your petition meets all the criteria outlined in the Guidance on submission of public petitions, the principal petitioner should sign and date the form in the box below. Other signatures gathered should be appended to this form.

Signature ...

Date 4/10/05

For advice on the content and wording of your e-petition please contact:

The Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP
Tel: 0131 348 5186      Fax: 0131 348 5088
e-mail: petitions@scottish.parliament.uk

Note
Completed e-petition forms should also be sent to petitions@scottish.parliament.uk
Dear Michael

PE917: MR KEVIN HERD – NHS 24

Thank you for your letter of 26 January inviting me to comment on the issues raised in Mr Herd’s petition calling for the Scottish Parliament to consider and debate the final report of the Independent Review of NHS 24. I welcome the opportunity to update the Committee on the progress that NHS 24 has made since the publication of the Independent Review Team’s report in October 2005.

Firstly, may I offer my sincere condolences to Mr Herd in the loss of his father. Mr Herd wrote to NHS 24 at the time of the events to point out shortcomings in the service provided and the organisation investigated his concerns. Acting on the conclusions of this investigation, NHS 24 has changed how it deals with calls from third parties, that is, a caller who is not the patient or a relative of the patient. As a result, NHS 24’s nurse advisers will now carry out a clinical assessment of someone who is the subject of a call without speaking to the patient or a relative of the patient first. In addition, computer systems have been revised so that calls about the same person can be cross-referenced and looked at as a whole case by NHS 24’s nurse advisers. Following the Petitions Committee meeting on 18 January where Mr Herd’s petition was discussed, Mr Herd met with the First Minister. I was asked to write to Mr Herd to update him on the progress NHS 24 is making towards addressing the recommendations and a letter issued to him on 9 February.

Since the report was published last October, NHS 24 has been implementing its recommendations. The attached Annex lists some of the recommendations which were made in the report and details the progress NHS 24 is making and continues to make in addressing these. I have concentrated on the key areas of preparation for winter, call-back, improving access and covering shifts, remote and rural areas and the review of process and practices. If the Committee would like to see a full progress report, which runs to 23 pages, then I am more than happy to provide this. In summary, more call handlers and nurse advisers have been employed, and the way in which calls are handled has been changed to ensure that patients receive a faster service. In the last few months this work has begun to pay off – callers are getting quicker access to the service and fewer callers have had to be called back by nurse advisers. None of this has been achieved at the expense of the clinical...
standards, the importance of which remain undiminished. There is now genuine partnership working between NHS 24 and NHS Boards supporting patient access to primary care services out-of-hours and this is now regarded as a joint responsibility. A new 3 year strategic plan covering proposals for further changes to service delivery processes will be the subject of discussion with all partners and stakeholders before being implemented. This will, among other things, cover the evaluation of the implementation of the satellite sites established in autumn 2005. The plan will also set out proposed changes to some of the performance measures, changes that are designed to ensure that the response to call demand is based on clinical prioritisation that better tailors the response to the needs of each patient.

The Executive shall continue to work with NHS 24 in helping to inform the public about the role of the organisation, especially in providing clinical advice to patients and supporting access to primary care services out-of-hours. Public understanding on this is continually improving. The Executive has been pressing NHS 24 and NHS Boards to adopt more formal joint working and partnership. Early signs of the success of this partnership working may be found in considering the responsiveness of the service over the recent Christmas and New Year holiday periods. These early successes are being built on, with partners now beginning to develop performance indicators that will support monitoring the overall patient experience in accessing primary care services out-of-hours.

NHS 24 has updated its website to make it easier to access some of the key information on the NHS Direct website. This covers the self-help guide and the health encyclopaedia. Further development of this information is planned.

At this time, the Scottish Executive does not intend to initiate a parliamentary debate on the final report of the Independent Review of NHS 24. All of the recommendations in the report were accepted and NHS 24, as well as the Executive and other NHS Boards, are working hard to address these.

I hope this is helpful.

ANDY KERR
Public Petitions Committee – a template for e-petitions

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Details of principal petitioner:
Please enter the name of person and organisation raising the petition, including a contact address where correspondence should be sent to.

Dr John C Crawford,

Text of petition:
The petition should clearly state what action the petitioner wishes the Parliament to take in no more than 5 lines of text, e.g.
The petitioner requests that the Scottish Parliament considers and debates the implications of the proposed Agenda for Change legislation for Speech and Language Therapy Services and service users within the NHS

The petitioner requests that the Scottish Parliament.....

Petition by Dr John Crawford, calling on the Scottish Parliament, to urge the Scottish Executive to ensure that the national school curriculum recognises the importance of information literacy as a key lifelong learning skill.

Period for gathering signatures:
Please enter the closing date for gathering signatures on your petition, which we would usually recommend is a period of between 4-6 weeks

Closing date: Friday 16th December 2005
Additional information:

Please enter any other information relating to the issues raised in your e-petition, including the reasons why the action requested is necessary. The text entered in this field should not exceed 2 pages. However, you may wish to provide further sources/links to background information.

I work as Library Research Officer at Glasgow Caledonian University where I undertake, among other things, research projects in the information field and I have become convinced that information literacy is an essential skill for the Scottish people for the 21st century which they must acquire if lifelong learning strategies are ever to be turned into a practical reality. It is impossible to be a lifelong learner if you do not have the independent learning skills which information literacy confers. I am currently directing a research project which is looking at developing an information literacy framework which spans the secondary and tertiary sectors. Information literacy skills - the link between secondary and tertiary education www.learnservices.gcal.ac.uk/lis/index.html

Information literacy being defined as:

knowing when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner.

This definition implies several skills. The skills (or competencies) that are required to be information literate require an understanding of:

- a need for information
- the resources available
- how to find information
- the need to evaluate results
- how to work with or exploit results
- ethics and responsibility of use
- how to communicate or share your findings
- how to manage your findings.

One of the big problems is one of definition as even those in educational development and policy making seem to confuse information literacy skills with IT skills but the two are not the same. IT skills (information technology) are about using computers – email, file management and so forth. Information literacy is about finding information in all physical forms (the internet, books etc.), evaluating its worth and making it work for you whether it is for work, educational or recreational purposes. Those of us working in higher education find that first year students are increasingly appearing with basic IT skills but generally poor or limited information literacy skills and competencies.

Information literacy skills and competencies are needed by:

- **Secondary school pupils** to help them learn to find information for themselves to support coursework and also to develop baseline skills which can be applied in tertiary education or in work where independent learning skills are increasingly needed.

- **Students in higher education** who are now expected to be independent learners and need information literacy skills, not just to complete their coursework but to give them learning skills to apply in the modern work situation.
• **Those in work** who need information literacy skills to find relevant, credible information to support decision making and improve their career prospects

• **Lifelong learners** who need information literacy skills to support the independent learning process

While it is true that the Scottish Executive is anxious to enhance access to digitally held information, and indeed all information resources, it does not recognise that the Scottish people have to have the information literacy skills listed above to be able to take advantages of the opportunities of e-learning and e-government so that they can access, critically evaluate and use the information within the available resources. The (international) Prague Declaration on the subject [http://www.infolit.org/International_Conference/](http://www.infolit.org/International_Conference/) describes information literacy as a civil right and a goal which all democratic societies should pursue. However there is no specific focus of responsibility or decision making within the Scottish Executive. According to the Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC) – The importance of information literacy is the subject of on-going discussions across a number of portfolios within the Scottish Executive. This means it is extremely complex as often one department doesn’t recognise where another department is already engaged in work. For example OfCom Scotland report to Tourism, Culture and Sport (as libraries do). Their remit is media literacy, which overlaps to some extent with information literacy. Tourism, Culture and Sport is working on a Digital Media Strategy which recognises the importance of information and digital skills (separating them). The Curriculum Review is looking at information literacy within the 3-18 curriculum but as their objective is to declutter the present curriculum and not to add to it there is no guarantee that information literacy will be included in the new curriculum.

The above complexity makes awareness raising and policy developing extremely difficult. In working on the research project both my project officer, Christine Irving and I have found, in approaching educational agencies, at both the secondary and the tertiary sector two common reactions which are a product of the policy vacuum outlined above:

• An ignorance of what information literacy is
• A belief that some other agency is dealing with it

For example, when we approached the Scottish Higher Educational Funding Council we were told that the Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC) was dealing with the issue. In practice SLIC been involved in and initiated national projects [http://www.slainte.org.uk/infohanding/index.html](http://www.slainte.org.uk/infohanding/index.html) but there is more work to be done not just by SLIC but by all interested parties. However the complex situation described above makes any progress on a national basis extremely complex and difficult for SLIC or any other interested party to deal with.

Given that there is a clear need for a focus of understanding, access and decision making within the Scottish Executive, we feel that, as responsible citizens, a petition to the Scottish Executive, is a good way forward.

We want to:

• Create a clear understanding of what information literacy is within the Scottish Executive and the agencies responsible to it
• Identify a clear focus of responsibility for information literacy within the Scottish Executive
• Ensure that responsibility is delegated in a clearly defined manner to an appropriate agency
• Ensure that the identified agency formulates and implements suitable policies, in conjunction with relevant centres of expertise in the areas of secondary and tertiary education, lifelong learning and the workplace.
Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting an e-petition:

Before submitting a petition to the Parliament, petitioners are expected to have made an attempt to resolve their issues of concern, by for example, making representations to the Scottish Executive or seeking the assistance of locally elected representatives, such as councillors, MSPs and MSPs. Details of those approached should be entered.

Contacts with most Scottish educational agencies including, Scottish Higher Education Funding Council, Learning and Teaching Scotland, learndirect scotland, the Scottish Qualifications Authority and the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. Email contact with my MSP, Ken Macintosh, who after reviewing contacts made recommended proceeding to a petition to which he would give his full support

Comments to stimulate on-line discussion:

Please provide at least one comment to set the scene for an on-line discussion on the petition, not exceeding 10 lines of text.

Information literacy is a core skill and should be recognised as such.

Information literacy is not an 'add on' it supports learning and teaching.

Petitioners appearing before the Committee

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Please indicate below if you do NOT wish to make a brief statement before the Committee when it comes to consider your petition.

I do NOT wish to make a brief statement before the Committee

Signature of principal petitioner:
When satisfied that your petition meets all the criteria outlined in the Guidance on submission of public petitions, the principal petitioner should sign and date the form in the box below. Other signatures gathered should be appended to this form.

Signature

Date 25/10/05

For advice on the content and wording of your e-petition please contact:

The Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP
Tel: 0131 348 5186 Fax: 0131 348 5088
e-mail: petitions@scottish.parliament.uk

Note
Completed e-petition forms should also be sent to petitions@scottish.parliament.uk
Dear James,

PETITION PE902

Thank you for your letter of 12 January 2006 seeking comments on petition number PE902 submitted by Dr John Crawford which calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Executive to ensure that the national school curriculum recognises the importance of information literacy as a key lifelong learning skill.

Please find enclosed a memorandum setting out the Scottish Executive’s views.

I hope this is helpful.

Yours sincerely

SIMON FORREST
Private Secretary
MEMORANDUM

Response from the Scottish Executive to the Scottish Parliament Public Petitions Committee on the petition submitted by Dr John Crawford.

The Committee considered PE902 calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Executive to ensure that the national school curriculum recognises the importance of information literacy as a key lifelong learning skill.

Scottish Executive response

1. The curriculum is non statutory and decisions on what and how to teach rest with education authorities and schools in response to local circumstances.

2. There is scope in the existing school curriculum to address the issues of information literacy within the context of the National 5-14 Guidelines, principally in the guidance on Information and Communication Technology. This guidance is designed to provide a framework for the integration of ICT into existing classroom practice so that all pupils become skilled, confident and informed users.

3. This framework ties in closely with the ongoing curriculum review. The central aspiration of A Curriculum for Excellence is to provide a framework for young people’s learning which will enable them to develop as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, effective contributors who are confident in the handling of information. Information literacy is unlikely to be a discipline in its own right; however literacy and communication skills are important elements in the four capacities underpinning A Curriculum for Excellence.
CONSIDERATION OF PETITION PE902

RESPONSE FROM HM INSPECTORATE OF EDUCATION

Comments sought on issues raised in the petition

HMIE fully endorses the importance of information literacy. The following is an extract from the HMIE interim report *The integration of information and communications technology in Scottish schools* which was published by HMIE on its website on 25 October 2005 in advance of an invitation “ICT summit” for directors of education and other senior personnel in education authorities, offered jointly by Learning and Teaching Scotland, SEED and HMIE on 14/15 November 2005. It was intended as a background paper to stimulate thinking at that event and more generally among all with an interest in responsibility for this area.

Most schools were at a very early stage of responding to an important consequence of the increase in pupil use of the Internet at all levels. Pupils required support in evaluating and using the immense and often unorganised range of information available through the Internet. Such activities required an appropriate level of knowledge, skills and judgement, now encapsulated in the concept of information literacy. This concept includes the learner’s ability to recognise when information is needed, how to locate it, how to analyse it and judge its value, and how to use it effectively as a useful part of his/her learning. Few schools had systematic approaches to developing information literacy to ensure that all pupils acquired this set of skills progressively as part of their passport of core and life skills.

HMIE is undertaking ongoing evaluation of the impact of ICT developments on the education of young people and intends to publish an overview report in late 2006. HMIE’s view of the current situation is that while we have noted a number of initiatives by SQA and SLIC in the promotion of information literacy, and some uptake in school and other establishments, this is far from embedded at school level.

*A Curriculum for Excellence* will provide an appropriate ethos and framework for learning and teaching in relation to information literacy as schools and partner bodies address the curriculum issues related to all four capacities. In particular, *A Curriculum for Excellence* will provide a key opportunity to recognise importance of information literacy as an important part of a young person’s capacity to be a successful learner and effective contributor.

GRAHAM H C DONALDSON
HM Senior Chief Inspector
HM Inspectorate of Education
1. We agree that the concept of information literacy is important and should be developed in all sectors of education.

2. We agree also with the petitioner that information literacy is not to be equated with or subsumed into ICT: we acknowledge that there is risk of these discourses becoming confused in some public debate.

3. The petitioner ignores the roles of primary and nursery schools in promoting information literacy and therefore appears to assume that their contribution cannot be of significance.

4. Although the petitioner refers only to secondary and higher education, he focuses his attention solely on provision in secondary schools without considering the contribution or responsibility of higher education.

5. This approach exemplifies a more general lack of awareness of Scottish school education.

6. Firstly there is and never has been any national curriculum in Scotland’s schools; there is no desire on the part of any group involved in school education to establish any such national curriculum nor any apparent intention by the Executive so to do.

7. Secondly the development of information literacy as described by the petitioner is already central to practice at most levels of education in Scotland.

8. The 3-5 Curriculum which provides guidance to early years educators makes it clear that a key role of nursery education is the development of skills and dispositions which will encourage young children to explore their world, to seek information about their world, to articulate this information and to evaluate it.
9. Within the 5-14 Programme which covers all of primary and the first two years of secondary education:

a. the 5-14 Guidelines for English language include strands on listening for information, talking to convey information, audience awareness, reading for information, functional writing, and awareness of genre (which helps develop understanding of the text)

b. the 5-14 Guidelines on mathematics include information handling (which includes a considerable emphasis on the use of graphical information) and problem solving (which requires the selection of appropriate data from a context)

c. the 5-14 Guidelines on Environmental Studies include within the social subjects (in addition to work on such specific issues as reading maps and assessing the relevance and quality of evidence) specific strands on identifying sources of information, selecting relevant information, processing information, evaluating information and reporting in various formats

d. the 5-14 Guidelines on Environmental Studies include within technology a requirement to research, analyse and evaluate

e. the 5-14 Guidelines on Environmental Studies include within the sciences a requirement to obtain information from experimentation, evaluating the quality of experiment and reporting in a variety of formats, with particular reference to graphical presentation

f. the 5-14 Guidelines on ICT include strands on collecting and analysing, searching and researching and communicating and collaborating.

10. Information literacy is also central to the Standard Grade programme in that almost all subjects contain a compulsory assessable outcome with a title such as information handling, problem solving or evaluation, which requires young people to develop and use the sorts of skills described by the petitioner as aspects of information literacy.
11. A similar statement can be made of courses within S5/S6 National Qualifications; in addition to the inclusion of such skills within a number of courses it is also possible to develop these skills through dedicated communications, literacy and problem solving units at all levels; within these it should be noted that these titles adopt a broad definition of literacy or numeracy with a strong stress on information handling. Communications, numeracy and problem solving are three of the five core skills which is intended all young people should develop.

12. *A Curriculum for Excellence* which is currently being developed to ensure a consistent experience for all school pupils and students from 3 to 18 specifies four outcomes for all young people: that they be successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, and effective contributors to society. Among the elaboration of these concepts it is explicitly stated that this requires that school pupils are able to:

   a. use literacy, communication and numeracy skills
   b. use technology for learning
   c. communicate in different ways and in different settings
   d. think creatively and independently
   e. make reasoned evaluations
   f. apply critical thinking in new contexts
   g. link and apply different kinds of learning in new situations
   h. make informed choices and decisions
   i. evaluate environmental, scientific and technological issues
   j. develop informed, ethical views of complex issues.

Such abilities appear to be closely linked to the petitioner’s concept of information literacy.

13. The five National Priorities which inform improvement planning at all levels of the school education system are: Achievement and Attainment; Framework for Learning; Inclusion and Equality; Values and Citizenship; and Learning for Life. While all seek to promote a better education for all pupils the last and first in particular contain objectives which are directly related to the promotion of information literacy.
14. *A Curriculum for Excellence* has as a central theme that of lifelong learning, a concept to which the petitioner is evidently committed. There is a difference in emphasis in that *A Curriculum for Excellence* argues that each stage of school, while supporting further learning, is valuable in its own right, while it appears to be the petitioner’s implicit view that school is primarily a preparation for later study and learning.

15. Within these policies and programmes teachers, advisers, and staff in teacher education institutions, supported by education authorities and SEED, have done a great deal of work to extend and develop practice within and outwith the classroom which relates to information literacy. This is regularly reported in the educational press in Scotland and in professional journals and is regularly showcased at events such as SETT.

16. There is clear evidence in the OECD PISA studies of literacy and mathematical literacy that 15 year olds in Scotland attain very highly in comparison with OECD members in both these areas; it should be noted that the definition of these two terms by the OECD is such as to include much of what the petitioner describes as information literacy.

17. It is surprising that the petitioner, in seeking information on policy on information literacy in Scottish schools, makes no reference to such sources as SEED or Learning and Teaching Scotland who could have provided detailed information on curriculum policy and practice or to SQA who are responsible for the Arrangements for national qualifications, or to HMIE who could have provided an overview of practice in this area.

18. In conclusion, we agree strongly with the petitioner’s desire to improve information literacy and we would not wish to be complacent but we believe him to be very selectively informed on the current position in Scottish schools. We would therefore argue that his proposed solution is unnecessary given policy and practice in this field in Scotland’s schools and the opportunities available to support schools in improving their practice.

20 February 2006
3 March 2006

Dr James Johnston
Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee
Public Petitions Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Parliamentary Headquarters
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Dear Dr Johnston

Consideration of Petition PE902
Response from Learning & Teaching Scotland

Thank you for your letter of 12 January 2006 regarding petition PE902 by Dr John Crawford.

Learning and Teaching Scotland welcomes the opportunity to comment on the issues raised by the Committee’s discussion of Petition PE902, which calls on the Scottish Parliament “to urge the Scottish Executive to ensure that the national school curriculum recognises the importance of information literacy as a key lifelong learning skill” (extract from the Committee’s letter to LTS). These issues can be considered under three headings:

1. Curriculum

The broad area of learning, study and information skills may acquire a more embedded and explicit presence in future curriculum frameworks, as it can be seen as underpinning the purposes of ‘A Curriculum for Excellence’ for students to be successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. The on-going curriculum review process provides opportunities for engagement with education professionals and interested parties.

LTS recognises that there is not yet a single commonly-accepted definition of information literacy. The rapid growth of the Internet and online services has also changed the context for learning; it is not enough for students to be able to find and access appropriate sources of information, they must also be able to make critical judgements about sources, quality and reliability of the information.

The extent of embedding of such skills in teaching practice across Scottish local authorities varies. Some school library resource services, such as in North Ayrshire, are known as having been particularly active in this sphere.

A basic understanding of information literacy is probably best gained during the primary school years, so that the student may benefit from more effective information-handling through the rest of their school experience.
This could then be reinforced and extended as the student progressed towards tertiary education and working life.

2. **Resources**

LTS has recognised the importance of this kind of skill-set for school learners for some years. LTS was involved in the development of information skills 'learning objects' for post-16 learners led by the Scottish Library and Information Council and the Scottish Further Education Unit, and liaises with SFEU, SLIC, and other bodies and individuals with an interest in this area on a frequent basis.

In the past two years, LTS has also procured digital content and learning resources for information literacy and study skills courses, which will be made available online as support for teachers and learners.

3. **Professional Development**

LTS believes that there is also an on-going need for professional development to refresh the information literacy skills of the teacher workforce, and for consideration of coverage of this skills area in initial teacher training.

I trust you will find this sufficient for your purposes.

Yours sincerely

**Bernard McLeary**  
Chief Executive

intcc  Mr L O'Donnell  
Mr N Morgan
Dr James Johnston  
Clerk  
Public Petitions Committee  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

1 March 2006

Dear Dr Johnston

Response to Petition PE902

Thank you for your recent letter inviting Universities Scotland to comment on the issues raised in petition PE902 by Dr John Crawford.

Universities Scotland agrees that information literacy is a key lifelong learning skill which should be incorporated in the national school curriculum. We feel that the best way forward is for discussion to take place with all the relevant stakeholders about how to effectively put this into practice.

I hope that you find this information useful.

Yours sincerely

David Caldwell  
Director
Scottish Qualifications Authority: Response to a petition by Dr. John Crawford, calling on the Scottish Parliament, to urge the Scottish Executive to ensure that the national school curriculum recognises the importance of information literacy as a key lifelong learning skill.

Introduction

The Scottish Executive works in partnership with a number of key partners in the Scottish education and learning community, such as SQA, LTS; HMIE and local authorities to ensure that every young person is able to develop their fullest potential, and that standards are raised and achievement is broadened. Within this SQA’s role is to develop appropriate qualifications for young people in Scotland’s schools, it does this in a manner that ensures that qualifications are designed to reflect the curriculum and the educational policies of the Scottish Executive.

Information Literacy in Existing Qualifications

SQA has already recognised the importance of information literacy as a key lifelong learning skill. Children, young people and adults all have to know when and why information is needed. They also need to know where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it.

Indeed, the skills involved in information literacy are not new, and many of SQA’s qualifications already require these skills to be demonstrated in a variety of ways. Some examples of this include:

- **Advanced Higher Sciences**

  Candidates for Advanced Highers in Chemistry, Physics and Biology produce an investigation report as one of the components for the external exam. The report is based on a practical investigation carried out by the candidate. This report requires the candidates to research material from a variety of sources e.g. reference books, journals, the internet. The researched material is used as a basis of the introduction to the report and may be used as supporting argument in the evaluation of their investigation. The candidates will also research suitable methods/procedures to be used in their investigation. Candidates must reference the material throughout their report and produce a reference list. Since the investigations involve the collection of scientific data, the candidates must process and evaluate the data to best display their results, this may be tabular, graphical or illustrative. Candidates may also be required to identify appropriate data to use and to discard data that isn’t appropriate (i.e. manage their findings). Comparisons of their own findings against established research, where it exists, are an essential part of the evaluation process; candidates are required to comment critically on both their own data and any data they may have researched from other sources, and compare the results.

- **Media Studies**

  Media Studies at Intermediate 1 & 2 and Higher have options for designing websites, and studying film, newspapers, adverts, magazines, and/or television. Generally, although this is not mandatory, there will be some study of secondary sources.

- **Advanced Higher Modern Languages**

  Candidates taking the Advanced Higher Course are required to undertake either the Extended Reading/Viewing Unit or the Language in Work Unit.
Successful performance in the above Units and in the Folio of Writing at Advanced Higher, which is an element of the External Course Assessment worth 15% of total External Assessment based on the above Units is dependent on the candidate's ability to recognise a need to acquire information, discover which resources are available and how to access them, to analyse, evaluate and select from accessed information, to communicate findings in a clear, ordered form and to behave ethically in acknowledging sources and refraining from plagiarism.

- **Latin, Greek and Classical Studies**

Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2 and Higher Classical Studies include use and evaluation of source-material among the skills involved.

"Ethics and responsibility of use" should be covered by the candidate declaration for submitted coursework (if honesty and avoidance of plagiarism or any other kind of cheating are the sorts of things meant here). In internal assessment, the teacher is required to ensure authenticity of candidate work.

The enquirer might find it useful to refer to the marking information issued for Standard Grade Latin Investigation and Standard Grade Classical Greek Investigation (available on the subject pages for Latin and Classical Greek on SQA's website). The approaches that the enquirer advocates have been essential for this element since the introduction of Standard Grade two decades ago.

- **English**

Use of sources would be an option in Standard Grade English (folio) and Access 3, Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2 and Higher English (Writing Outcome) - if a candidate chooses subject-matter for which such an approach would be suitable.

- **Modern Studies**

At Advanced Higher candidates produce a dissertation as a component of the Course assessment. They devise their own proposition to investigate and the record their research methods as they progress. They access information from a variety of sources both printed and electronic, including the internet and secondary texts, which can include academic research. They also conduct primary research into their chosen area and compare findings with other sources. They are evaluating the usefulness of various media and base their conclusions on the evidence they have considered. Their findings are presented in a formal dissertation, with appendices detailing their research methods and displaying key statistics in appropriate formats. References are credited appropriately.

- **History**

Individual research skills are developed progressively though the subject from Intermediate 2 through Higher to Advanced Higher. At each level the candidate chooses an issue to investigate, plans their research and consults a variety of sources, typically but not exclusively printed. At Advanced Higher there is a requirement to embed historiography into their dissertation, taking on board the latest academic findings and debates. Candidates evaluate the source materials, both primary and secondary, that they unearth, and produce a formal written conclusion to they
question they have posed. At advanced Higher they annotate their bibliography critically.

**Future Curriculum Developments**

The Executive is currently reviewing the contents of the curriculum, in consultation with SQA and other appropriate organisations under the *A Curriculum for Excellence* initiative. The aspiration of *A Curriculum for Excellence* is: "to enable all children to develop their capacities as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors to society."

Some of the proposals outlined in *A Curriculum for Excellence* include:

- more skills-for-work options for young people, robustly assessed and helping them to progress into further qualifications or work
- more space in the curriculum for work in depth, and to ensure that young people develop the literacy, numeracy and other essential skills and knowledge they will need for life and work

These proposals will clearly require young people to be confident in handling and evaluating different sources of information. To that end, it may be that the petition is well-timed, as the Executive is currently looking at the school curriculum, and that it would be appropriate for the petition to be made available to those working in this area. It seems likely that, in the 3-15 stages of *A Curriculum for Excellence*, the idea of "information literacy" will be embedded in the "functional" strand of English, which will be compulsory for all pupils.

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School Library Association in Scotland Response
in support of the Petition on
Information Literacy (PE902)

The School Library Association in Scotland strongly supports the petition brought by Dr John Crawford to urge the Scottish Executive to ensure that the national school curriculum recognises the importance of information literacy as a key lifelong learning skills area. This is especially important in the light of current developments in 'A Curriculum for Excellence', which will determine the shape of the curriculum for Scottish schools for years to come.

School librarians work to provide resources in support of the curriculum, and are frequently involved in directly teaching, or indirectly supporting the teaching, of research skills and information handling skills, to individuals, small groups and whole classes, and are therefore in a very strong position to appreciate the importance of Dr Crawford's petition.

We would strongly support the petition to keep information literacy as a recognised, discrete skills area, which should be directly taught as a separate subject in primary and secondary schools. The development of information skills policies and lessons is currently haphazard and disconnected. The research conducted by Dr Crawford and others has demonstrated beyond question the importance of ensuring that information literacy is co-ordinated, developed and taught consistently, so that pupils can fully gain the skills they require for the 21st Century.

The key principles of A Curriculum for Excellence are for “all young people to become successful learners, responsible citizens, effective contributors and confident individuals.” (Taken from A Curriculum for Excellence: progress and proposals. Scottish Executive, 2006)

The School Library Association in Scotland therefore urges the Scottish Executive to ensure that information literacy is retained as a core skill, vital to lifelong learning, within education.

F. Devoy,
Convenor,
SLA (S)
e-mail: fiona.devoy@falkirk.gov.uk
Information Literacy Petition to the Scottish Parliament

Comments from Unison School Librarians

Unison School Librarians welcome the opportunity to comment on this highly significant Petition. At the moment in schools, there is no cohesive approach to Information Literacy. While aspects of it are present in a large number of curricular subjects, there is no continuity, no assessment of pupils' ability in information literacy techniques and, especially, no common method in progressing this key area; each curricular subject assumes that the pupils have already acquired the skills elsewhere. This inconsistent and piecemeal approach will often lead to pupils becoming bored, disaffected and frustrated, as they do not know how to carry out a task involving information literacy skills in a methodical or successful manner. Unison school librarians often have to face the negative consequences, and often find it challenging to compensate for the lack of a more co-ordinated and logical methodology. As well as disadvantaging learners, teachers and librarians, this lack makes it impossible for librarians to fulfil the demands made by Libraries Supporting Learners (the document used by Her Majesty's Inspectors when inspecting libraries) To quote: “To develop as independent and aspirational learners throughout school and in life, pupils need to be taught learning skills overtly”, LSL, p. 14.

Unison school librarians are also concerned at the apparent absence of explicit e-literacy skills from “A Curriculum for Excellence”, as Dr Crawford has highlighted, as this absence will impact negatively on pupils’ ability to develop 21st Century Skills. Unison school librarians are concerned that their efforts to highlight these educational concerns have been seen in some quarters as an attempt to “talk up” their own role. In fact, they are motivated by concerns for the future of the pupils. To quote from the Information Literacy website based at Syracuse University, New York http://www.informationliteracy.org/default.php “At no time in history has the ability to locate, organize, evaluate, manage and use information been more critical for today's learners. These skills, collectively referred to as information literacy, lay the groundwork for success in every phase of a student's life both in and out of school”

Unison School Librarians therefore wish to fully support the Petition being put forward by Dr Crawford. We believe strongly that the success of Dr Crawford’s Petition will enable learners to progress significantly in becoming fully au fait with information literacy, and consequently able to progress through school and on to college, university etc with a much firmer and more solid set of key skills.

The success of the Petition would inevitably mean that Unison school librarians would be better able to meet the level of standards and expectations already laid down by HMIe, local authorities, etc. It would also enable Unison school librarians to support teaching colleagues more comprehensively and successfully an in a much more integrated manner. Most of all, it would enable Unison school librarians to optimise their contacts, direct and indirect, with all learners.

Ian McCracken
Public Petitions Committee – a template for public petitions

Should you wish to submit a public petition for consideration by the Public Petitions Committee please complete the template below. Please refer to the Guidance on submission of public petitions for advice on issues of admissibility before completing the template. You may also seek advice from the Clerk to the Committee whose contact details can be found at the end of this form.

Details of principal petitioner:
Please enter the name of person and organisation raising the petition, including a contact address where correspondence should be sent to, email address and phone number if available

Eurig Scandrett
Leuchie North Lodge

Text of petition:
The petition should clearly state what action the petitioner wishes the Parliament to take in no more than 5 lines of text, e.g.
The petitioner requests that the Scottish Parliament considers and debates the implications of the proposed Agenda for Change legislation for Speech and Language Therapy Services and service users within the NHS

The petitioner requests that the Scottish Parliament......
develops and publishes Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) on ecovillages.

Additional information:
Any additional information in relation to your petition, including reasons why the action requested is necessary, should not be included here. However, it may be appended to the petition and will be made available to the Public Petitions Committee prior to its consideration of your petition. Please note that you should limit the amount of any additional information which you may wish to provide in support of your petition to no more than 4 sides of A4.
Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition:

Before submitting a petition to the Parliament, petitioners are expected to have made an attempt to resolve their issues of concern by, for example, making representations to the Scottish Executive or seeking the assistance of locally elected representatives, such as councillors, MSPs and MPs. Please enter details of those approached below and append copies of relevant correspondence, which will be made available to the Public Petitions Committee prior to its consideration of your petition.

The petitioner, several ecovillage groups and other signatories have had many discussions with councillors and planning officials in several local authorities. Lack of planning policy, and factors which arise from this, are consistently cited as problems for the development of ecovillages. Further research has been carried out by Lusi Alderson as part of her MSc dissertation. It is clear that this issue cannot be resolved in the absence of policy from the Scottish Parliament.

Request to speak:

All petitioners are given the opportunity to present their petition before the Public Petitions Committee. The Convener will then make a decision based on a number of factors including the content of the petition and the written information provided by the petitioner as to whether a brief statement from the petitioner would be useful in facilitating the Committee’s consideration of a petition.

Please indicate below whether you wish to request to make a brief statement before the Committee when it comes to consider your petition.

Yes / No*

*Delete as appropriate

Signature of principal petitioner:

When satisfied that your petition meets all the criteria outlined in the Guidance on submission of public petitions, the principal petitioner should sign and date the form in the box below. Other signatures gathered should be appended to this form.

Signature

Date ......................... 30 / 8 / 2005 ..........................................................

Please note that any additional information, copies of relevant correspondence and additional signatures should be appended to this form and submitted to:

The Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee,
The Scottish Parliament,
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP
Tel: 0131 348 5186    Fax: 0131 348 5088
e-mail: petitions@scottish.parliament.uk
Consideration of Petition PE 903

Thank you for your letter of 13 January 2006 seeking the Scottish Executive’s comments on the issues raised in this petition.

The Scottish Executive has carefully considered not only the petition itself but also the separate e-mails that Eurig Scandrett and Lucy Alderson sent directly to Ministers in order to provide background information on the concept of ecovillages.

The Scottish Executive is sympathetic to many of the objectives involved in the development of ecovillages. In particular, the fact that ecovillages aim to organise development in such a way that would leave a low ecological footprint (for example, high energy efficiency, low demands on gas and electricity) strike a chord with the objectives set out in the Executive’s recently published Sustainable Development Strategy.

Furthermore, Scottish Planning Policy 3: Planning for Housing also expresses sympathy for low-impact forms of housing development in rural areas. Particularly relevant is paragraph 53, which, although focusing on the rural context and not referring to eco-villages specifically, provides a supportive context. Paragraph 53 states that ‘proposals for sustainable residential development using innovative, energy-efficient technologies with particularly low impacts on the environment may be acceptable at locations where more conventional buildings would not.’ The paragraph goes on to state: ‘The control of innovative low impact uses through the planning system is best achieved by a plan-led approach. Proposals should be carefully assessed against specified sustainable development criteria and the wider policy objectives of the development plan.’

The policy set out in SPP3 will be given due regard by planning authorities and other decision makers when considering development plan policies and planning applications. However, this policy will be only one of a number of material considerations. As an ecovillage is a physical housing development, land on which it could be built should still be the subject of an allocation in the development plan. Consequently, any group that wished to develop one would have to seek the support of the planning authority through the development plan process. A decision on whether to
do so would be subject to a number of considerations, including issues relating to transport, waste and drainage, design, local community opinion and so on.

These considerations would still need to be undertaken in the event that – as suggested by the petitioner - the Executive published an SPP specifically on ecovillages. Consequently, we do not believe that drafting such a targeted policy (particularly in light of the material highlighted in SPP 3 above) would make a significant difference to the likelihood of applications for ecovillages getting planning permission. However, SPPs are reviewed on a regular basis, and it may be that – depending on consultation with interested parties - a future revision of SPP 3 explores the issues around planning and ecovillages in a more comprehensive manner.

I hope that this reply is helpful.


Yours sincerely


Linda Craik
PS/DD
Dear James

Consideration of Petition PE907

Thank you for consulting the Royal Town Planning Institute regarding the issues raised in Petition PE903. We are pleased to respond to the Public Petition Committee's request for comments on this petition, which raises important questions concerning the role of planning policy and practice in the encouragement of ecovillages.

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is the UK body chartered to represent the planning profession and offers these comments from the point of view of a diverse and policy neutral professional body committed to supporting devolved government in Scotland. The Institute has 1900 members in Scotland working across all sectors of central government, local government, government agencies, the voluntary sector, private consultancy, the development industry and academia. Since devolution, the Institute has empowered its RTPI in Scotland Office, together with its Scottish Executive Committee, with the responsibility for working with government and public bodies generally for the improvement of the planning system in Scotland. This is in accordance with its charter obligation to work for the public interest.

The RTPI supports the general aims of ecovillages, as set out in the background information to the Petition, of achieving energy efficient and low-impact lifestyles. We also agree with the need to apply principles of ecological design, energy efficiency, social cohesion and sustainable development in the provision of new affordable housing in rural as well as in urban areas. However, we have reservations concerning the need for a Scottish Planning Policy specifically
addressing ecovillages and consider that progress on these issues will require actions across a number of areas.

The Institute considers that the concerns raised by this petition may need to be addressed through a number of policy areas relating to sustainable building design, small scale renewable energy generation, social housing policies and green travel plans. We note the current work to set national sustainability standards for new housing through the introduction of a Code for Sustainable Homes and a growing number of examples of best practice such as the Hockerton Housing Project in Nottinghamshire, which seeks to implement sustainable building design and to encourage other similar community projects. Such examples may provide models for future developments.

The Institute does not consider that it would be appropriate to produce a separate Scottish Planning Policy dedicated solely to ecovillages. SPPs are designed to provide overarching statements of Scottish Executive policy on nationally important land use and other planning matters, supported where appropriate by locational frameworks. As noted by the background material to the Petition, there are a number of existing SPPs that are relevant to the consideration of ecovillages.

SPP3: Planning for Housing remains the first point of reference on the general policy for housing and whilst ecovillages are not directly addressed or mentioned in this policy document, the SPP does advance policy in respect of small-scale rural housing developments. The overall message of SPP3 is that there is considerable scope for allowing more housing developments of a small-scale nature and that this should be expressed in development plans, either as part of general settlement policy or as a separate sub-set on rural housing policy. The SPP notes that one option is for development plans in areas with a known shortage of affordable housing to identify small-scale sites that are well integrated and close to services, perhaps as components of mixed-use sites. The SPP also refers to the work of the Forestry Commission Scotland in exploring the potential to sell land to registered social landlords for the purposes of building affordable social housing in rural areas and to promote the use of sustainably produced timber and timber products as part of the process.

The Institute considers that it may be more appropriate to consider the need for further guidance and information on best practice in relation to the provision of sustainable building design through building regulations and through updates to Planning Advice Notes such as PAN 74 on Affordable Housing and Pan 72 on Housing in the Countryside. Issues surrounding ecovillages, as discussed in the background papers to the Petition, embrace a wide array of public policy areas, including policies which lie outside the planning system in relation to building standards, housing policy, social housing, community land ownership and governance. This suggests that any support for ecovillages will need to embrace a wider policy arena than planning policy per se and involve a number of public
agencies such as Communities Scotland with regard to policies on social housing provision and the Forestry Commission in relation to land availability in rural areas. With regard to individual planning decisions it should be noted that whilst these are made with reference to the local plan they will be based on a number of material considerations and on the results of consultations with a wide range of bodies and community interests.

The Institute trusts that these comments are of assistance and has no objection to its comments being made available to the public in the usual way. Should you wish any clarification please do not hesitate to contact me at the RTPI Scotland, Edinburgh office: 57 Melville Street Edinburgh, EH3 7HL phone: 0131 226 1959, email: veronica.burbridge@rtpi.org.uk

Yours sincerely

Veronica Burbridge (Dr)
Scottish Planning Policy Officer

www.scotland.rtpi.org.uk

Registered Charity no. 262865
SEDAResponse Regarding PE903 – to develop Scottish Planning Policy on Eco-villages

Dear Dr. Johnston

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above. This issue, and the many adjacent issues of affordable housing, land reform and ecological design in its widest sense have occupied the hearts and minds of our members for many years, so there has been much interest within the association. There is a strong sense that guidance on this issue is needed, and that perhaps its time has now come.

We would like to emphasise that the association supports any attempts within policy to encourage community based and environmental initiatives, but we are concerned too that any guidance offered is robust enough to withstand a degree of abuse from those who would seek to take advantage of it. We are also keen to ensure that any support for pro-actively sustainable intentional communities should be structured such that the benefits of such an approach are available to those in existing communities and settlements. In other words, we would not like to see a "them and us" situation created as a result.

We appreciate that the issue is large and complex, and also that any such policy guidance could have a significant transformative effect on the Scottish social and physical landscape. In other words this is a potentially very important piece of guidance and should be given the proper time and care to be developed.

We would hope that some form of Working Party might be inaugurated to consider this proposal in more depth and we would very much like to be involved.

In the meantime, we have been developing a list of issues which we feel might be considered for inclusion in any such guidance, and I append to this letter our initial draft of these. Please consider the list a well-meaning contribution to a extensive piece of work, the fruits of which could have far reaching implications for everyone in Scotland, as well as those who actively seek a more communal, sustainable and fulfilling way of life.

Yours sincerely

Chris Morgan

www.seda2.org Email:info@sed2.org Charity No. SC020799
PROPOSED SCOTTISH PLANNING POLICY ON ECO-VILLAGES - RESPONSE FROM SEDA

PREAMBLE

Extensive support already exists within Scottish Planning Policy for sustainable development generally.

The Scottish Executive Planning Policy documents, especially SPP1 SPP3 and SPP15 emphasise the need for encouraging sustainable development.

SPP1 – The Planning System,
• Promoting regeneration of land buildings and infrastructure.
• Promoting the use of previously developed land and minimising Greenfield development.
• Conserving important historic and cultural assets.
• Protecting and enhancing areas for recreation and natural heritage.
• Supporting better access by foot, cycle and public transport.
• Encouraging energy efficiency through the layout and design of development.
• Considering the lifecycle of the development from the outset,
• Encouraging prudent use of natural resources.
• Promoting opportunities for the development of mixed use areas where appropriate.
• Tackling climate change by reducing the need to travel, energy efficient design and appropriate choice of materials

SPP3 – Planning for Housing,
• Energy Efficient Housing: through siting and orientation, improved insulation, efficient use of resources in construction.
• Sustainable Settlement Strategies

SPP15 – Planning for Rural Development,
• Low-impact forms of housing development can provide both economic and environmental benefits ... using innovative, energy efficient technologies with particularly low environmental impacts.
• Issues around shortage of affordable housing particularly in rural areas.

Local Authority Planning Policies, relate to specific areas, i.e. Perth & Kinross Council Housing in the Countryside Policy, consideration of ‘Pilot projects creating eco-friendly houses’ and the definition of ‘Fragile Countryside Areas’ in Badenoch and Strathspey, whereby development can be encouraged in areas suffering from excessive de-population.

However none of these policy documents give specific detail as to what an eco-friendly house or a low-impact development, or an eco-village might mean.

As we see it, the intention of the proposal is to create a set of detailed guidelines, or ‘Performance Standards’. Workable policy statements, which would enable the Scottish Executive, Local Authority Planning Department, Housing Association, or group of individuals to gauge whether or not a particular proposal would fulfil the criteria of being an eco-village.

It seems likely that any guidance would need to operate at both a national and a local scale, for example influencing, or allowing exceptions to Local Development Plans. We also feel it is important that any guidance developed is able to accommodate both new-build and the refurbishment and re-working of existing buildings and communities.

Our initial aim is to offer collected guidance from SEDA members, as acknowledged experts in the field of ecological design. Beyond this, we would suggest that study of existing communities, and the lessons that have been leaned there could prove extremely helpful in developing an understanding of the potential benefits and problems.
1. PROJECT PLANNING
There are different models which might be called eco-villages, or intentional sustainable communities, which can range from a cluster of eco-buildings and services, through co-housing developments to virtually autonomous communities, often adopting a permaculture\(^1\) approach. Issues addressed include community creation, ecological design and sympathetic landscaping, reduced living costs and ecological footprinting\(^2\) through energy efficiency and shared facilities.

Key lessons from one of the founding members of a prominent and long-standing eco-village in Australia include:\(^3\)

- Eco-villages form because of the social needs of people – and their need to feel a sustainable relationship with nature
- The size of an eco-village should be based on what is comfortable for people: could range from say 10 – 2000
- Intending residents, or at least a core group, should be in at the start of the planning process
- Eco-villages need a plan of management which is agreed by local government. It should include concept plan, energy plan, design plan or guidelines for houses, landscape plan, pedestrian movement, and social contact or social management plan
- Local government needs to provide guidelines, performance standards and/or identified sites
- Eco-villages are more sustainable if they provide for employment on site

2. LAND TENURE
The cost of purchasing development land in Scotland, or land for which planning consent can be obtained, is possibly the largest single factor in ensuring that eco-villages (and many other sorts of development) don’t get off the ground. The high capital cost of land and housing means that many locally based, and locally employed individuals and groups cannot afford to compete in the current inflated property market.

One important aspect of eco-village development is the exploration of alternative land tenure options, such as part leased/part ownership, ground rent, housing co-op, or plots purchased at valuation with a housing trust ‘buy back’ clause in the deeds. Such alternative forms of ownership are now being investigated within the mainstream Housing Association movement because of the disparity between income and housing cost.

3. COMMUNITY
One of the prime drivers of eco-villages and other similar ‘intentional communities’ is the desire for a more fulfilling communal existence. However much this should be encouraged though, it should not be done at the risk of creating ‘ghettos’ aside from existing communities and infrastructure. Whilst some may well be geographically remote (such as Scoraig, near Ullapool) it is important that infrastructure is in place, or set up to ensure healthy interaction with existing settlement and facilities.

Circumstances will differ with each situation, but questions to be addressed will likely include. Who is to be living in the eco-village, what will the demographic mix be, how does this compare with the outside community? What size, how many houses / housing clusters. Will there be any communal facilities, for use by others or not? Employment opportunities within the development? A ‘mission statement’, might be required from the proposed eco-village community.

4. LAND USE
For many, re-establishing the link between people and the land is the prime motivation behind such communities. Certainly many existing communities offer valuable insight into the nascent ideas on land reform and land stewardship in Scotland. Issues to be addressed include the use marginal land or

\(^1\) Permaculture: a set of techniques and principles for designing sustainable human settlements with plants, animals and buildings, and especially the relationships between them. It’s guided by a set of ethical principles, such as “care for the Earth”, “care for people”, and “sharing the surplus”.

\(^2\) The Ecological Footprint is a measure of the “load” imposed by a given population on nature. It represents the land area necessary to sustain current levels of resource consumption and waste discharge by that population.

brownfield sites for building on first, design of spaces between buildings. Depending on locality, this could be land for recreation, farming, allotments or small gardens. Whatever the amount of land available, its use should be carefully considered and planned, with the imperative that potential for local food and fuel production should be optimised wherever possible.

5. TRANSPORT
The environmental impact of transportation is widely recognised. Options for transport policy within developments might include general ‘car-free’ policy, with a principle to cycle or use public transport where possible. Failing that, sensible vehicle sharing, or pooling arrangements should be set in place. Other aspects include use of bio-fuels, initiation of ‘home zones’ and many others.

6. EMPLOYMENT
An eco-village should if possible be near to centres of employment and/or be designed and organised in such a way that allows people to be able to work from home or within the eco-village community. This could mean that individual houses have workshops or office spaces or the provision of on site ‘work units’ encouraging the establishment of small business or ‘social entrepreneurs’, and not necessarily from within the community only. It is important that employment opportunities are linked to the wider local community, not internalised within the eco-village itself, employment strategies offer an important way of integrating new communities with existing social structures.

7. PROCUREMENT
The procurement process is generally seen as a crucial part of the formation of the bonds between the community which will then occupy the development. It is important to support the potential for this communal process so as to support the long term health of the community once established. How will the individual houses be built, and does this address the issues of ‘affordability’, and ‘community’ as mentioned above? Are residents being given the opportunity to self build, community self build, part self build/part project management, housing co-op with building contractor, a mix of all the above, or something else.

8. HOUSING LAYOUT AND DESIGN
As with existing guidance, but perhaps more profoundly, the housing layout and design should ‘fit into’ the site and the locality. For many environmental reasons, house design should tend toward groups or clusters, whilst ensuring maximum use of solar gain. A sensitive housing layout could also enhance an eco-village’s sense of community.

9. RESOURCES, MATERIALS AND HEALTH
Maximising the use of local resources is a fundamental aspect both to the building process, and then the ongoing life of the community. This could mean re-using existing buildings on the site, or using materials that are already available on the site, such as earth, trees for timber, or old bricks from a previous building. To reduce the amount of ‘embodied energy’, use materials that are local and unprocessed, over something that has to be manufactured and imported. Maximise also the use of building materials that are renewable, such as timber, straw, stone or earth.

10 BUILDING RELATED ENERGY USE
The link between energy use and climate change is now established and it is to be expected that eco-villages of any sort will seek to minimise (fossil fuel based) energy use in all ways available. Designing compact dwellings, ensuring high levels of insulation, and air-tightness, using renewable energy fuels for heating and electricity generation are all options.

11 WATER AND WASTE
Even in areas of high rainfall, minimising water use by design and careful choice of appliances is important. If appropriate, consider rain water harvesting. Protect and enhance any water-courses on the site. Re-use and re-cycle waste products, especially organic matter into compost. If no mains or existing sewage treatment exists, consider an on-site waste treatment system.
POTENTIAL CASE STUDIES

a. Traditional Scottish Crofting Townships
b. Centre for Alternative Technology (C.A.T.), Wales www.cat.org.uk
c. Findhorn, Scotland www.findhorn.org
d. Scoriag, Scotland
e. Munksøgaard, Denmark
f. Saettedammen, Denmark
g. Auroville, India www.auroville.org.in
h. Torri Superiore, Italy www.ecovillages.org/Italy/torrisup
i. The Camphill Network www.camphill.org
j. Lebensgarten Ecovillage, Germany
k. The Farm, Tennessee USA
l. Ecotop, Germany
m. Earthaven, North Carolina USA
n. Twin Oaks, Virginia USA
o. Upacchi, Italy

BIBLIOGRAPHY

H. Jackson & K Svensson Ecovillage Living – Restoring the Earth and Her People
Diana Leafe Christian Creating a Life Together – Practical Tools to Grow Ecovillages and Intentional Communities
Jan Martin Bang Ecovillages A Practical Guide to Sustainable Communities

An excellent source of information about eco-villages is the Global Eco-village Network, the website for which is http://gen.ecovillage.org/
TG.01
Parliamentary Headquarters
Edinburgh
EH 99 1SP

For the Attention of Dr James Johnson,

Thank you for offering Findhorn ecovillage at The Park an opportunity to contribute to the discussion sparked by petition PE 903 submitted by Eurig Scandrett.

We agree that creating a planning designation for ecovillage developments would assist innovation in Scotland and provide nationally recognised criteria for best practice in eco-settlement design.

As you may be aware, the Findhorn Foundation began its ecovillage project over 20 years ago with the purchase of the (ex RAF) Findhorn Bay Caravan Park where the community began. Our aim has been to create a diverse village economy with responsive social structures, united by shared ecological, cultural and spiritual values. Working with the core principle of not taking more away from the Earth than we give back, Findhorn ecovillage has been consistently exploring ways to diminish the 'ecological footprint' of our various activities. The Findhorn Foundation is an educational charity that is the oldest partner in our expanding eco-settlement at The Park; there are now more than 40 other businesses & organisations engaging along side. We are a founder member of the Global Ecovillage network (GEN). The Findhorn ecovillage has been awarded a UN-HABITAT Best Practice award. see also http://www.ecovillagefindhorn.org/ and http://www.ecovillagefindhorn.org/fc/index.php

We welcome further dialogue and inquiry in these matters. We would be happy to host a site visit or offer consultation in the many practical elements that rest within our experience of creating an ecovillage settlement. The two accompanying submissions have been prepared by Alex Walker, a local businessman and financial advisor who is also chair of our IPS, Ekopia; and by Jonathan Dawson, author, educator, consultant and executive secretary for the Global Ecovillage Network-Europe.

kind regards,

Mari Hollander, Chair of Findhorn Foundation Management team
Response to Petition PE 903 submitted by Eurig Scandrett

In support of this petition, we wish to refer to the book on this subject: Ecovillages: New Frontiers for Sustainability, written by Jonathan Dawson and to be published in April by Green Books as Schumacher Briefing paper No. 12. In this book, Mr Dawson lists a host of examples from around the world where ecovillages have pioneered the introduction of new, energy-efficient technologies: low-impact, ecologically sustainable ways of building houses, growing organic food, treating waste water, community-level energy-generation and so on. He then goes on to address the natural alliances that are forming between local authorities and ecovillages in the achievement of targets for environmental performance in various fields. To quote from the book:

"As ecovillages have richly demonstrated, much can be achieved with a minimum of official assistance. Nonetheless, it has also been noted that the tightening regulatory framework together with lack of access to official financing have acted as a significant brake on new and existing ecovillage developments.

The first step in addressing this is for government at national and local level to recognize the value of ecovillages as social and technological pioneers and as catalysts for regeneration. Our hope is that this book may contribute to this in some small way. An important reciprocal task for ecovillages worldwide is to enter into a conscious dialogue with their own local authorities, community groups and other community bodies, to raise their profiles in their own backyards.

Today, in almost every corner of the world, we see communities being sapped of their vitality. Farming is in deep decline and villages are being taken over by dormitory populations or are being abandoned, while depressed inner cities areas become breeding grounds for crime. These are problems that ecovillages are expressly addressing. The community banks and currencies, the community-supported agriculture and energy-generation schemes, the eco-technology enterprises, the community-based governance structures are precisely designed to breathe life back into depressed communities.

There is an obvious match up here between the needs of governments seeking to regenerate their local communities and the models developed by ecovillages to achieve just this aim. The greatest step that government can take towards creating this match is in creating new planning categories that favour the emergence of community-based centres that are researching, demonstrating and providing training on locally-appropriate models for sustainable living. This makes most obvious immediate sense in those areas that are already experiencing severe depopulation, including isolated areas of Spain, Italy and the west of Ireland. Such thinking, indeed, appears to have influenced the recent decision on the part of Tipperary North Council to re-zone the land adjacent to Cloughjordan village for the new ecovillage development. Similarly, Byron Bay is one of several councils in Australia to have created an Ecovillage Zone within which
ecovillages are permitted ‘as of right’, and thus do not need to go through the lengthy re-zoning process.

In no sense could such a more liberal attitude towards ecovillage development on the part of the planning authorities be seen as the ‘writing of blank cheques’. In granting planning permission to The Village, the local authorities imposed 25 conditions that the development would need to meet, including several of an ecological nature relating specifically to this project.

In similar vein, the UK organization, Chapter 7, that campaigns to “provide access to land for all households through environmentally sound planning”, proposes strict and tight controls over dwellings and settlements that should be permitted http://www.tlio.org.uk/chapter7/defining.html. These include the following:

- The project has prepared a strategy for the minimization of motor vehicle use.
- The project plans to minimize the creation of waste and to reuse and recycle as much as possible on site.
- The project has a strategy for energy conservation and the reduction, over time, of dependence on non-renewable energy sources to a practical minimum.
- The project can demonstrate that no activities pursued on the site shall cause undue nuisance to neighbours or the public.

Chapter 7 has, additionally, recognised the need for a Management Plan for all new settlements (to include additional items at the discretion of local authorities not able to be included by Planning Conditions).

The introduction of such conditions together with the setting of a review period would make this a very low-risk strategy for local authorities that has the potential to deliver substantial tangible benefits. Moreover, given that we are referring to ecovillages here primarily as regional R&D and training centres, the proposal is not that local authorities necessarily respond favourably to proposals for a large number of ecovillage projects in their areas. It may well be appropriate, initially at least, to create an opportunity for one per region (how this is defined remains up for question) and to give approval to the proposal that looks likely to best meet the needs of the area in question.

A more ambitious scheme would be for local or central government to make vacant brown-field sites available for ecovillages under the legal form of land trusts. The land trust model “whereby the land is granted by the government on condition that it be taken out of the future sale value of the property, thus keeping it in perpetuity as affordable housing stock” is already being considered by the Government as a way of helping low-income key workers such as nurses and teachers onto the bottom rung of the housing market.”

We feel that that this section from Mr Dawson’s forthcoming book represents our views on the matter of the petition. We would urge you to support it. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if we can provide any further information.

Respectfully yours
Jonathan Dawson
GEN-Europe
To Public Petitions Committee re Petition PE903.

1. Our own relationship with Moray Council has been very positive. Nonetheless we understand that initiatives elsewhere have experienced considerable difficulties in persuading the planning authorities of the benefits of an integrated ecovillage approach to development.

2. Given the growing profile of Ecovillages world-wide in response to public perceptions of environmental problems some guidelines on the development of Ecovillages would therefore be helpful.

3. Given the changing nature of technology and the intentionally experimental nature of most ecovillage projects these would ideally be a broad set of principles rather than confined to detailed and itemised lists. Such principles should aim to distinguish between:
   - a genuinely innovative project, which attempts to embrace many different aspects of ecovillage best practice, and
   - a developer seeking to enhance their chances of receiving planning permission by adding a few environmental features to an otherwise ordinary project.

Similarly, whilst an ecovillage must by definition be different from mainstream practice, its citizens should seek to engage with its local community and region in a variety of ways. It should not simply be a housing development for those fortunate enough to live there.

4. We recommend that any such guidance come under the three main headings of ecological, economic and cultural sustainability. These headings are widely used in the ecovillage movement.

5. Ecological sustainability would normally include (although not necessarily be limited to) some attention to the following issues:
   - building and construction codes of practice, with particular attention to building materials
   - energy efficiency
   - renewable energy sources
   - organic agricultural production
   - biological waste water treatment
   - transport systems
   - the role of nature and wild land.

6. Economic sustainability would normally include some reference to:
   - mixed use developments
significant elements of both collective ownership and social enterprise
innovative financial systems such as a complementary currency
fair trade
diversity. Although a project may well begin under the aegis of one
organisation, any plan should seek to create a matrix of co-operative interests
rather than singular control. (This is a key difference between an intentional
community and an ecovillage).

7. Cultural sustainability should include elements of:
• community regeneration
• social and cultural diversity
• a significant role for collective ownership and inclusive decision making
• holistic education
• national or global networking (rather than planned isolation).

Yours sincerely

Alex Walker
Chairman
Public Petitions Committee – a template for public petitions

Should you wish to submit a public petition for consideration by the Public Petitions Committee please complete the template below. Please refer to the Guidance on submission of public petitions for advice on issues of admissibility before completing the template. You may also seek advice from the Clerk to the Committee whose contact details can be found at the end of this form.

Details of principal petitioner:

Please enter the name of person and organisation raising the petition, including a contact address where correspondence should be sent to, email address and phone number if available

KATIE MOFFAT,

Text of petition:

The petition should clearly state what action the petitioner wishes the Parliament to take in no more than 5 lines of text, e.g.

The petitioner requests that the Scottish Parliament considers and debates the implications of the proposed Agenda for Change legislation for Speech and Language Therapy Services and service users within the NHS

Petition by Katie Moffat calling for the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Executive to consider introducing an early breast cancer screening programme in Scotland to start from age 30/35 upwards.
**Additional information:**

Any additional information in relation to your petition, including reasons why the action requested is necessary, should **not** be included here. However, it may be appended to the petition and will be made available to the Public Petitions Committee prior to its consideration of your petition. Please note that you should limit the amount of any additional information which you may wish to provide in support of your petition to no more than 4 sides of A4.

Implementing an early breast cancer screening programme from age 30 upwards would replace the current breast cancer screening programme which does not start until women are 50. Hopefully, Westminster will then follow this example, and roll out a similar programme across the rest of the UK.

The current programme no longer reflects what is going on in society regarding breast cancer. Too many younger people in their early 30’s upwards are being diagnosed and not enough is being done to highlight the fact that, while a scan at 50 yrs old is okay, statistics show that breast cancer in the age bracket of 50-60 is actually decreasing while for those aged 30-50 it is increasing.

As breast cancer incidences are increasing in these younger age groups, implementing a screening programme which starts earlier may cost the Scottish Executive initially, but in the end it will save a lot more lives and - by being able to treat earlier - may be cheaper in the long run.

Where there is a history of breast cancer already present in the family – such as mine – there is a greater chance of it being inherited. I am lucky, I was aware of this and I pursued this issue with my doctor and now get a blood test once a year. Not everyone is aware of this or prepared to fight to the same extent for it.

Breast cancer is aggressive and within 6 months can kill a woman if not diagnosed. If breast cancer screening is offered earlier to Scottish women this will save a lot more lives and give women the chance to make decisions at an early stage rather than being told too late - resulting in possible invasive surgery or even death.

I implore the Scottish Parliament to address this issue in Scotland and do something about it before the mortality rate increases to unmanageable limits.

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**Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition:**

Before submitting a petition to the Parliament, petitioners are expected to have made an attempt to resolve their issues of concern by, for example, making representations to the Scottish Executive or seeking the assistance of locally elected representatives, such as councillors, MSPs and MPs. Please enter details of those approached below and append copies of relevant correspondence, which will be made available to the Public Petitions Committee prior to its consideration of your petition.

I have spoken with Mike Pringle MSP who was pleased to support this petition. I am currently contacting other organisations such as Breast Cancer Awareness and am also contacting other MSP’s.
Request to speak:
All petitioners are given the opportunity to present their petition before the Public Petitions Committee. The Convener will then make a decision based on a number of factors including the content of the petition and the written information provided by the petitioner as to whether a brief statement from the petitioner would be useful in facilitating the Committee’s consideration of a petition.

Please indicate below whether you wish to request to make a brief statement before the Committee when it comes to consider your petition.

Yes
*Delete as appropriate

Signature of principal petitioner:
When satisfied that your petition meets all the criteria outlined in the Guidance on submission of public petitions, the principal petitioner should sign and date the form in the box below. Other signatures gathered should be appended to this form.

Signature ..Katie Moffat........................................................................................................

Date ......16/11/05........................................................................................................

Please note that any additional information, copies of relevant correspondence and additional signatures should be appended to this form and submitted to:

The Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee,
The Scottish Parliament,
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP
Tel: 0131 348 5186 Fax: 0131 348 5088
e-mail: petitions@scottish.parliament.uk
Dear Michael,

Thank you for inviting me to comment on petition PE904, submitted by Katie Moffat, calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Executive to consider introducing a breast cancer screening programme to commence from the age of 30. I will also comment on issues that were raised during discussions by the Public Petitions Committee (PPC) on 21 December 2005.

Incidence and Mortality Rates for Breast Cancer in Scotland

During discussion, it was suggested that the incidence of breast cancer in women aged 30 – 50 is on the increase. The figures in Scotland do not reflect this view. Please see the graph attached at Annex A1 which supports this statement. You will also note from the graph that the incidence rates of breast cancer in Scotland among younger women are relatively small in comparison to older age groups.

Survival for breast cancer patients has increased substantially from 60% for those diagnosed in 1977 - 1981 to 77% in 1997 - 20012. This improvement is likely due to a combination of new treatments, particularly hormonal therapy, earlier diagnosis of cancers in women participating in the Scottish Breast Screening Programme (SBSP), and better organisation and delivery of care for patients.

In Towards a Healthier Scotland3 the government set a target for a 20% reduction in the mortality rate from all cancers for people aged under 75 between 1995 and 2010. The latest available data represent a decrease of 14.8% over nine years. At this rate the target would be met.

Scottish Breast Screening Programme (SBSP)

The SBSP offers routine screening by mammogram every three years for women aged 50-70. Women aged over 70 can continue to be screened by contacting their local breast screening unit. In 2004/05 alone over £10 million was invested in the Programme, which continues to be extremely successful. In 2003/04 over 140,000 women were screened and 1063 cancers were detected4.
Since 2003 a phased age extension of the SBSP has taken place with the upper age limit being raised from 65 to 70. This is now in place in all of the six breast screening units in Scotland, benefiting an estimated 50,000 additional women every year.

Screening Women Under 50 Years of Age

Mammograms seem not to be as effective in pre-menopausal women, possibly because the density of the breast tissue makes it more difficult to detect problems and also because the incidence of breast cancer is lower. The average age of the menopause in the UK is 50. As women go past the menopause, the glandular tissue in their breast "involutes" and the breast tissue is increasingly made up of only fat. This is clearer on the mammogram and makes interpretation of the x-ray more reliable. Breast cancer is also far more common in post-menopausal women and the risk continues to increase with rising age.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) of the World Health Organisation (WHO) evaluated the evidence on breast cancer screening in 2002\(^5\). For women aged 40 to 49 years IARC concluded that there is only limited evidence for a reduction in mortality.

The Forrest Report\(^6\), on which the SBSP is based, recommended further research to assess the clinical and cost-effectiveness of screening women under 50. This research was mentioned during the Committees discussions and is entitled \textit{UKCCCR randomised controlled trial of the effect of breast cancer mortality of annual mammographic screening of women starting at age 40} \(^7\).

This study commenced in 1991 with 23 screening centres in the UK participating, including one in Scotland. Final results are expected later in 2006 and these will be considered in Scotland by the National Advisory Committee on Breast and Cervical Screening, which will make any recommendations on changing the current age range if they consider it appropriate.

Other Screening Techniques

The PPC recognised that mammography was not a suitable tool for screening women under the age of 50 and they suggested that there may be other screening techniques which could be employed. The two possible techniques are ultrasound and Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) and I would like to consider each of these in turn.

Ultrasound

Ultrasound has been found to be a useful tool in the evaluation of palpable or mammographically identified masses\(^8\). There is however no evidence to support its use in a population based screening programme. A guideline published in 2003 by the Royal College of Radiologists\(^9\), established that ultrasound is not an effective imaging method for routine screening.

A review of the literature and expert opinion in 1998 by the European Group for Breast Cancer Screening\(^10\) concluded, "the use of ultrasound in population screening of asymptomatic women is associated with unacceptably high rates of both false positive and false negative outcomes. At present there is little evidence to support the use of ultrasound in population breast cancer screening at any age". 
MRI

Genetic counselling and risk assessment services have been provided within NHSScotland for many years and Guidance on the referral and management of individuals who may be at increased risk of developing cancer because of their family history was issued in 2001\(^1\). At present, women in Scotland with a high familial risk of breast cancer are offered mammographic screening at intervals dependent on their age and level of risk.

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) Familial Breast Cancer Guidelines were published in 2004\(^2\) and advised that “On the basis of current evidence, MRI and ultrasound should not be used in routine surveillance practice but may have a role in problem-solving mammographically detected abnormalities (Note: several MRI studies have already been presented at major cancer meetings and will report in the next 2 years. This recommendation should be reviewed when they become available)”.

As these studies have now been published\(^3,4,5\) NICE plan to review and advise if there is sufficient new evidence to support recommendations for change to the existing NICE Familial Breast Cancer Guideline.

Self Referral

I would encourage any woman who considers there may a problem with her breast to see her GP immediately. NHS Health Scotland produce a publication called 'Well Woman' which, amongst other things, covers breast cancer and self awareness and what women should be on the lookout for. This is distributed to all area Health Boards and should be available free of charge to all women via their GP.

Conclusion

I would like to pass on my thanks to Katie Moffat for taking the time to compile and submit this petition. Breast cancer is the commonest cancer among women in Scotland. We remain committed to reducing cancer deaths in Scotland and we will continue to invest in the SBSP and also in the Scottish Cervical Screening Programme and Scottish Bowel Screening Programme, which is due to roll out across Scotland from Mach 2007. We will also continue to consider, as it emerges, evidence of benefit of the use of any other tools and techniques that might be employed to detect breast cancer in younger women. I trust the information supplied in this response will be of use to the PPC.

ANDY KERR
1 Information taken from NHS National Services Scotland - Information Services Division. (http://www.isdscotland.org/isd/cancer_definition.jsp?pContentID=1420&p_applic=CCC&p_service=Content_show&)

2 Cancer in Scotland Summary (http://www.isdscotland.org/isd/files/Cancer_in_Scotland_summary_m.pdf)


4 Information taken from NHS National Services Scotland - Information Services Division. (http://www.isdscotland.org/isd/cancer_definition.jsp?pContentID=1624&p_applic=CCC&p_service=Content_show&)


7 http://www.nature.com/bjc/journal/v92/n5/abs/6602395a.html;jsessionid=507DE38F3F6C7D1D84DF70BA3BDC770F
http://www.nature.com/bjc/journal/v92/n5/abs/6602396a.html

8 NCI. Breast Cancer (PDQ®): Screening. 2004 (http://www.nci.nih.gov/cancertopics/pdq/screening/breast/HealthProfessional/page3#Section_59)


13 MARIBS – Screening with magnetic resonance imaging and mammography of a UK population at high familial risk of breast cancer: a prospective multicentre cohort study (MARIBS) Lancet vo. 365 No. 9473 pp 1769 – 1778

14 Surveillance of BRCA1 and BRCA2 mutation carriers with magnetic resonance imaging, ultrasound, mammography, and clinical breast examination JAMA vol. 292 no. 11 pp 1317 – 1325

15 Efficacy of MRI and mammography for breast cancer screening in women with a Familial or genetic predisposition – New England Journal of Medicine vol. 351 no. 5 pp 427 – 337)
Dear Dr Johnston

Breast and Cervical Screening National Advisory Group Response to Public Petition PE904

I am writing in response to your letter dated 12 January 2006, addressed to Deirdre Evans seeking the views of the National Advisory Group on the above petition to introduce an early breast cancer screening programme in Scotland to start from age 30.

The Scottish Breast Screening Programme invites women to attend for breast screening by mammography every three years between the ages of 50 and 70 years. The upper age limit has recently been increased from 64 years to 70 years. Women are invited by GP practice and all eligible women will receive an invitation to attend before their 53rd birthday. The Scottish Breast Screening Programme performs well against clinical standards and an average of 76% of women accept the invitation for screening. In the 3 year period covering 2002/03 to 2004/05, 349,372 women were screened and 2,385 cancers were detected. These data are based on the Pritchard Standards which are UK wide performance indicators for the national breast screening programme and relate to women screened, aged 50 to 64 years only.

Women under 50 are not offered routine screening. Mammograms have not been shown to be as effective at detecting breast cancer in pre-menopausal women possibly because of the density of the glandular tissue. After the menopause breast tissue is increasingly made up of fat. Fat shows up more clearly on the mammogram and makes interpretation of the x-ray more reliable. The average age of the menopause in the UK is 50. Breast cancer is far more common in postmenopausal women and the risk of developing breast cancer increases as women get older. The incidence of breast cancer in women under the age of 40 is lower than that of women aged 50 and over. Women under 50 years who are concerned about a specific breast problem are not eligible to participate in the screening programme but can ask their GP to refer them to a hospital breast clinic.

The World Health Organisation’s International Agency for Research on Cancer has published an evaluation of breast screening and deems that there is sufficient evidence of its efficacy to screen women aged 50-69 years by mammography but there is limited evidence of the efficacy of screening women 40-49 by mammography as the sole screening modality, and there is inadequate evidence for the efficacy of screening women under 40 by mammography in reducing mortality from breast cancer.

Mammography is however recommended as a screening tool for the management of younger women assessed to be at medium and high risk of breast cancer due to a family history of breast cancer. The Scottish Executive has published referral and screening guidance to support the implementation of genetics services for breast cancer predisposition.
The Royal College of Radiologists does not recommend mammography as the first imaging modality in women under 35 as absorbed radiation is higher in younger women. The Royal College also does not routinely recommend breast ultrasound or MRI scanning for breast screening in either women under 40 years or women aged 40 and over.

An age trial has been conducted to consider what benefit, if any, can be gained by inviting women for screening from age 40. This trial was set within the NHS breast screening programme. Women in the trial aged 40 and 41 were invited annually for eight or nine years and monitored against women not invited for screening in that age group. The trial commenced in 1991 and women were invited to the breast screening centre in Edinburgh which was the participating centre in Scotland. The trial is funded by the UK Co-ordinating Committee on Cancer Research and outcomes will be available later this year which will measure mortality from breast cancer in the two trial arms. The National Advisory Group will consider this evidence when it is available and, if appropriate, make recommendations on changing the age range for screening.

The National Advisory Group remains committed to the current policy of screening women aged 50 to 70 years and will review further evidence to support a change in the age range as it becomes available.

Yours sincerely

Carol Colquhoun
National Co-ordinator Screening Programmes

cc       Mrs D Evans, Director, National Services Division
               Mr J Glennie, Chairman, Breast and Cervical Screening National Advisory Group
               Mr Z Tuck, SEHD
On behalf of the Cross Party Group on Cancer in the Scottish Parliament, we are pleased to respond to the public petition lodged by Ms Katie Moffat calling for the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Executive to consider introducing an early breast cancer screening programme in Scotland to start from age 30 upwards [PE 904].

As a Group we would want to address the question of benefits to be gained by young women to be invited for routine breast cancer screening.

We are aware that the NHS breast cancer screening programme has been hailed by cancer charities as a great success, detecting cancers at an early stage and saving lives. We would have thought that extending the scope of the programme and improving take-up could improve health outcomes further.

However after consulting with cancer charities and reading the available evidence on the value of routine breast screening of younger women we have found that there are major issues of clinical and cost effectiveness to resolve and whether indeed it would improve health outcomes for women as young as 30.

Results from studies by Cancer Research UK indicate that there would be a benefit in terms of a reduction in breast cancer mortality from reduction of the lower limit to age 45 years. However even then there is still considerable uncertainty about the exact size of the benefit and the exact balance of benefits and harms [for example, resulting from false positives].

The benefit is doubtful because the density of breast tissue is greater in younger women which makes it hard for mammography to detect tumours and there is a danger that some will be missed.

In addition, tumours tend to progress more rapidly in younger women so an interval of 1-2 years is likely to be necessary for screening younger women instead of the current three-yearly intervals for women aged 50-70. This has implications not only for the funding of the NHS screening programme but also the qualified staff resources available to undertake this extra activity.
The Forrest Report, on which the NHS Breast Cancer Screening Programme is based, recommended further research to assess the clinical and cost-effectiveness of offering routine screening of women under 50.

Known as the Age Trial, this research, funded by Cancer Research UK and the Medical Research Council, has looked at the effect of breast cancer mortality of annual mammographic screening starting at age 40. Results are likely to be published early in 2006 and will give a clearer picture about the benefits to be expected for that age group, although a more definite answer to the petitioner's specific case of starting screening at 30 would presumably still be in doubt.

Eighty per cent of breast cancers occur in women over the age of 50. The group of charities in the UK known as the Breast Cancer Forum have agreed on risk ratios for each age group: women 40-50 have a 1 in 200 chance of developing breast cancer, women aged 30-40 a one in 2,000 chance.

While the jury may still be out on screening women aged 40-50, it is questionable whether it is in the public interest to routinely invite women under 40 with such a low level of risk and chance of detection, which may create inappropriate level of concern in the general population.

There are a number of strategies to target those under the age of 40 who may develop breast cancer. Cancer charities would encourage the continued support for these strategies including; genetic screening for those with family history; encouraging access to symptomatic services for those with health concerns promoting breast awareness as a key strategy for early detection in the female population and encouraging access to information for those with concerns.

We will discuss Ms Moffat's petition at our next meeting of the Cross Party Group on Wed 8\textsuperscript{th} March, but we would want to thank her for bringing this subject before the Parliament and for highlighting the needs of younger women who may be at risk of breast cancer. We hope that that the enclosed information from our members might be helpful in your deliberations.

Yours sincerely,

Kenneth Macintosh MSP
Joint Convener of Cross Party Group on Cancer
Dr James Johnston  
Clerk to the Scottish Parliament Public Petitions Committee  
Parliamentary Headquarters  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

20 February 2006

Dear Dr Johnston

Thank you for your letter of 15 December regarding Katie Moffat’s petition calling for the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Executive to consider introducing an early breast cancer screening programme in Scotland to start from age 30 upwards.

NICE produced cancer service guidance for the NHS in England and Wales in October 2002, entitled *Improving outcomes in Breast Cancer*, which recommended that all women aged 50-70 should be invited for mammograms every three years. We have no immediate plans to review this guidance.

You may wish to be aware that NICE clinical guidelines, although available in Scotland, have no formal status (unlike the Institute’s technology appraisals). The Scottish NHS does, however, have access to clinical guidelines produced by the Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network, which is funded by NHS Quality Improvement Scotland.

I note that you have also contacted the National Screening Committee from which I would anticipate you will receive a more substantive response.

I hope that you find this information useful.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Dillon  
Chief Executive
Dr James Johnston  
Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee  
TG.01  
Parliamentary Headquarters Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP  

Wednesday 8 February 2006  

Dear Dr Johnston,  

Thank you for inviting Cancer Research UK to comment on the petition calling for the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Executive to consider introducing an early breast cancer screening programme in Scotland to start from age 30 upwards.  

Cancer Research UK experts are conducting research into the possibility of extending the current screening age range for breast cancer. Results from experimental and observational studies indicate that there would be a benefit from extending the screening age range in terms of a reduction in breast cancer mortality.  

However, there is still considerable uncertainty about the exact size of the benefit and the exact balance of benefits and harms (for example, resulting from false positives and increased radiation exposure).  

Currently the NHS Breast Screening Programme calls women for mammography at three-yearly intervals, however, tumours tend to progress more rapidly in younger women so shorter intervals of 1-2 years are likely to be necessary in younger age groups. This has implications for the funding of the NHS screening programme and the staff resources available to undertake this extra activity. There is the added complication of an increased density of breast tissue in younger women, which makes mammography a less accurate screening tool.  

The extension of the age range would require substantial additional resources for the NHS Breast Screening Programme. However, financial resources are not the only problem. Screening units often have difficulty meeting current demand because although they have the money to employ a full complement of radiologists and radiographers, they cannot find staff to appoint. This problem would be exacerbated by an extension of the age range.  

**Cancer Research UK’s research - the Age Trial**  

The Forrest report, on which the NHS Breast Cancer Screening Programme is based, recommended further research to assess the clinical and cost-effectiveness of offering routine screening to women under 50. This research, the UKCCCR randomised controlled trial of the effect of breast cancer mortality of annual mammographic screening of women starting at age 40, is known as the Age Trial.
Cancer Research UK contributes to the funding of this trial, which is also funded by the Medical Research Council and is undertaken at the Institute for Cancer Research.

The main aim of the study is to evaluate the effect of annual mammographic screening of women starting at ages 40 to 41 on mortality from breast cancer, thus giving a definitive answer to the outstanding question of whether population screening from this age, rather than 50, is beneficial or not. 160,000 women have been entered into the trial since 1991. Those in the intervention arm have been invited for screening at regular intervals and all women are monitored for breast cancer incidence and mortality. The trial is not looking at mammography in women under the age of 40.

Mortality results from the UK Age Trial are likely to be published early in 2006 and will give a clearer picture about the benefits to be expected. While Cancer Research UK does not oppose lowering the age limit in principle, we believe that it would be prudent to wait for the results of the Age Trial before proposing a policy change.

In addition, Professor Stephen Duffy, of the Wolfson Institute of Preventative Medicine and who is funded by Cancer Research UK, is collaborating on a study looking at screening programmes in countries where screening women in their forties is common, such as Sweden. The investigation is estimating the benefits and potential harms associated with involving women under age 50 in routine screening.

**Cancer Research UK's position**

Extending the age range for breast screening would almost certainly save additional lives. However, Cancer Research UK believes that until we have sufficient evidence to support this policy proposal, we should not advocate a change which is potentially undeliverable (given funding and staff constraints) and which could significantly affect the performance, reputation or morale of the current service, which is delivering excellent results. We will continue to review our position as more evidence becomes available.

If you would like to discuss this further or would like to speak to one of our experts on this issue, we would be happy to help. Please contact our Public Affairs Officer for Scotland, Lesley Conway on 0131 311 4802 or email lesley.conway@cancer.org.uk.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

Professor Alex Markham
28 March 2006

Dear Dr. Johnson

Consideration of Petition PE904

Your letter of 12 January 2006 to Professor Rigby has been passed on to me for comment.

The Cancer Screening Evaluation Unit is coordinating the trial of mammographic screening in young women, which is studying the effectiveness of annual mammographic screening from age 40 in reducing mortality from breast cancer. The trial has randomised approximately 160,000 women to an intervention arm offered annual screening from age 40, and a control arm who become eligible for the national screening programme from age 50.

Interim findings, using surrogate outcome measures to predict the numbers of breast cancer deaths in the two arms of the trial, suggested a reduction of 10 to 11% in breast cancer mortality in the group offered annual mammography from age 40, although the result was not statistically significant.

We have recently submitted the first results on observed mortality for publication, and will be pleased to send you a copy as soon as these are published.

I would also comment that any recommendations on the age at which screening should commence, and on the frequency and modality of screening, should be considered separately for women at high risk due to a family history of breast cancer, who will be at increased risk from a younger age.

I hope these comments are helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Sue Moss